



**- International Fund for Agricultural Development –
- Scouting and Sharing Innovation in Western and Central Africa –**

- Empowerment through Farmer Field Fora (FFF) -

I- Background :

1. Name of innovation:

Empowerment through Farmer Field Fora (FFF).

2. Country - Region:

- A total of nine countries, but with greatest concentration in Burkina Faso, Niger, Benin and Mali

3. Organization:

International Institute for tropical Agriculture (IITA) through Projet niébé pour l'Afrique (PRONAF)

4. Who is the innovator?

- IITA

5. Actors involved:

Farmers, national agricultural research and extension systems (NARES), IFAD investment projects, NGOs and development projects

6. Implementation date:

- From 2000

7. Type of innovation:

- Technical and policy- knowledge sharing approach

II- Key issues :

8. Summary:

Farmer Field Fora were developed after the failure of conventional extension framework to effectively deliver technologies to smallholder farmers. Most of the research technologies developed to improve agricultural productivity encountered low adoption rates by farmers, often because the research recommendations did not directly address farmer's priority constraints. PRONAF adopted FFF as a farmer capacity building process through: i) Decision making based on observation of real field conditions, ii) Pest and natural enemies identification, iii) Data recording and analysis through an Agro-Eco-System Analysis (AESA) approach, and, iv) Identification of realistic innovations by farmers according to field conditions. Main FFF activities are weekly meetings of 25-30 farmers in their fields, farmer experimentation and farmer fora. In the weekly meeting farmers learn how to observe, analyze data and make decisions based on observation and group discussion. The curriculum of FFF includes varieties selection and testing, appropriate cropping practices, pest and disease management, harvest management, testing and validation of new technologies etc. Also, FFF includes the diffusion of relevant information to increase awareness and knowledge exchange to prevent HIV/AIDS and malaria impacts on labour and agriculture productivity and income. A successful experience of FFF application in health has been done in Benin where FFF was upgraded to farmer welfare fora (FWF), an approach which attempts to integrate agricultural knowledge with knowledge in the health sphere through awareness-raising on HIV/AIDS, safe use of pesticides, and other priority health issues.

9. What issue does the innovation address?

The FFF is a participatory platform for improving decision-making capacity and stimulating local innovation for sustainable agriculture. It addresses the following issues:

- Abuse and misuse of agrochemical inputs, related human and livestock poisoning and environmental pollution;
- Over-Dependence of farmers on under-qualified and over-stretched extension agents for advice on farm management and decision making;
- And Lack of incentive and capacity of farmers to adapt the innovations to their own field and socioeconomic conditions.

10. Key success factors for replication:

- FFF is a fully participatory approach based on learning by doing principle;
- FFF can be adapted to any crop and any farmer's speculations (soil management, livestock, poultry, etc.);
- Based on local agricultural constraints and opportunities, it promotes relevant local cowpea practices and innovations;
- Farmers can reduce substantially the use of chemicals with appreciable cowpea yield;
- FFF promotes effective and sustainable farmer led-training in context of lack of extension agents in most WCA countries;
- Possibility of sharing operating costs with CBO, NGOs, development projects and farmer's communities through effective decentralization.

11. Accessibility: (Poor, gender, youth, migrants...)

FFF are accessible by any category of farmers especially smallholders, women and youth

12. Difficulties encountered:

- Hardship of manual pounding of botanical extracts and small quantity;
- Lack of price incentive (premium price) for chemical pesticide-free cowpea in the countries;
- Difficult Integration of FFF into existing national extension systems. Most of the time, FFF is adopted by farmer's communities, community-based-organizations (CBO), NGOs and development projects;
- The number of trained farmers is low compared to conventional technology diffusion approaches
- Lack of credit access for financing farming.

13. Financial aspects:

PRONAF has significantly reduced the unit cost per trainee of information dissemination through farmer to farmer training and knowledge sharing. Effective cost-sharing has also taken place between IITA, IFAD investment projects, and NARES.

III- Technical Summary :**14.**

FFF is not a crop specific approach but a more holistic process to provide farmers the skills for innovation and validation, Integrated Crop Management (ICM), and innovation diffusion. FFF consist of four key components:

- ✓ Agro-Eco-System-Analysis (AESA) for farmer decision-making. AESA includes field investigation, analysis of crop performance and health at every growth stage, strategies for identifying appropriate options and improved farmer decision making;
- ✓ Integrated crop management (ICM) and biological pests control to improve yield and revenue;
- ✓ Participatory Research approaches (PRA) which help improve skills to identify, test and validate local and outside innovations including cowpea genetic resources;
- ✓ Aptitude of participants to become facilitators in their own communities.

IV- Follow up :**15. Key contacts:**

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16. Useful web link:

- www.iita.org , Cereals and legumes sections, agro-biodiversity, agriculture and health.
- www.ifad.org : IFAD activities in Sub-Saharan Africa
- www.pronaf.info

17. Key documents: (Name of the document + Link or Contact or Co ordinates)

- Adéoti R., O. Coulibaly et M. Tamò. (2002). Facteurs affectant l'adoption des nouvelles technologies du niébé *Vigna unguiculata* en Afrique de l'Ouest. *Bulletin de la Recherche Agronomique du Bénin*. No 36.
- Adetonah, S., P. Atachi, O. Coulibaly and M. Tamo, Perceptions Paysannes et Protection de l'environnement: Gestion intégrée de lutte contre le foreur des fleurs et gousses du niébé maruca vitrata au Bénin. Benin : IITA.
- Togbé, G. A.G., R. C. Tossou,, O. Coulibaly, et B. Gbaguidi ;, (2005), *Champ Ecole Paysan et renforcement de l'influence sociale des producteurs de niébé dans le Département du Couffo au Bénin*. Benin: Bulletin de la recherche agronomique du Bénin. No. 50, Décembre 2005, P1-9IITA
- Gbaguidi B,(2005), Analyse de performance du CEP paysan dans l'utilisation et la diffusion des technologies par les producteurs: cas du Projet Niébé pour l'Afrique au Bénin ; Mémoire pour l'obtention du DEA.
- James B, O Coulibaly and B. Gbaguidi, (2003), *New solutions for cowpea production in Africa*, Pesticides News No. 61, September 2003, P-12-13.
- Nathaniels, N.Q.R (2005). Cowpea, FFS and Farmer-to-Farmer Extension: a Benin case study. AGREN paper No. 148.